

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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AMEMBASSY LAGOS
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AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

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LAGOS FOR USDEL SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, BR
SUBJ: GEISEL REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

1. IN MARCH 31 LUNCHEON SPEECH MARKING 14TH ANNIVERSARY
OF 1964 REVOLUTION, PRESIDENT GEISEL REAFFIRMED HIS PUBLIC
COMMITMENT OF DECEMBER 1, 1977, TO BRING INTO BEING BY THE
END OF HIS TERM INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES WHICH WOULD SUBSTITUTE
CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS, PROTECTIVE OF BOTH INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS
AND THE SECURITY OF THE STATE, FOR THE "ACTS OF EXCEPTION"
(INSTITUTIONAL ACTS) UNDER WHICH BRAZIL HAS BEEN GOVERNED
SINCE 1968 (77 BRASILIA 9900).

2. GEISEL QUOTED PERTINENT PORTIONS OF HIS DECEMBER 1
SPEECH, MAKING CLEAR THAT HIS DETERMINATION TO IMPLEMENT
IT HAS NOT WAVED IN PAST FOUR MONTHS. HE CAUTIONED, HOWEVER,
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AGAINST "PRECIPITATE ACTION WHICH, IN ITSELF, WOULD BE
DISASTROUS," SAYING IT IS NECESSARY "TO WORK TOWARD THE
CREATION OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS WHICH WOULD BE AUTHENTIC,
CONSISTENT WITH OUR REALITY," AND NOT SIMPLY BE COPIES OF
INSTITUTIONS ELSEWHERE SO THAT BRAZIL WOULD RETURN
TO THE SITUATION EXISTING BEFORE THE REVOLUTION.

3. GEISEL SAID THAT NOW THAT --EXCEPT FOR ISOLATED INSTANCES-- TERRORISM AND SUBVERSION HAVE BEEN CONTAINED, THAT FEDERAL AND LOCAL POLICE FORCES HAVE BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE, THE ARMED FORCES ARE RETURNING TO THEIR PROFESSIONAL TASKS WITHOUT BEING CONTINUALLY CONCERNED WITH SECURITY OPERATIONS. HE WARNED, HOWEVER, AGAINST "DEMAGOGIC, HYPOCRITICAL AND IRRESPONSIBLE POPULISM, AS WELL AS THE UTOPIANISM OF 'FULL DEMOCRACY' AND OF OUTMODED LIBERALISM". HIS STRONGEST WARNING, THOUGH, WAS AGAINST THE CORROSIVE ACTION OF "ALL RADICALS, AS MUCH OF THE RIGHT AS OF THE LEFT", A STATEMENT THAT WAS WELL RECEIVED IN POLITICAL AND PRESS CIRCLES.

4. GEISEL'S SPEECH WAS BROADCAST AND TELECAST NATIONWIDE THE EVENING OF MARCH 31. HIS IMMEDIATE LUNCHEON AUDIENCE, IN ADDITION TO TOP MILITARY LEADERSHIP, INCLUDED FOR FIRST TIME NUMEROUS CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES, E.G., PRESIDENTS OF SENATE, CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, SUPREME FEDERAL TRIBUNAL AND OTHER COURTS, LEADERS OF ARENA AND OF BOTH EMPRESARIAL AND LABOR CONFEDERATIONS (LATTER ARE, OF COURSE, UNDER TIGHT GOVERNMENT CONTROL).

5. GEISEL'S SPEECH WAS FRAMED BY ISSUANCE BY THE THREE MILITARY MINISTERS EARLIER MARCH 31 OF THEIR TRADITIONAL "ORDERS OF THE DAY", ALL OF WHICH THIS YEAR WERE SUPPORTIVE OF GEISEL'S POLITICAL OBJECTIVES.

6. INITIAL REACTION TO THESE EVENTS WAS PREDICTABLY DIVIDED.
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ARENA WAS SUPPORTIVE, WHILE THE MDB LEADERSHIP REITERATED ITS LONGSTANDING COMPLAINT THAT IT HAS STILL NOT YET BEEN INFORMED OF JUST WHAT GEISEL HAS IN MIND. TRADITIONALLY SKEPTICAL "O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO", HOWEVER, COMMENTED EDITORIALY THAT: "WITHOUT FALLING INTO EXCESSES OF OPTIMISM, ONE CANNOT BUT RECOGNIZE THAT THE ORDERS OF THE DAY AND THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH, BECAUSE OF THEIR TONE DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF PREVIOUS YEARS, PERMIT THE NATION TO DISCERN AN OPENING." O ESTADO PEGGED THIS CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM TO THE FACT THAT ALL FOUR STATEMENTS RECOGNIZED THAT THERE HAD BEEN BROAD CIVILIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE 1964 REVOLUTION, AND THAT EXPLICIT OR IMPLICIT IN ALL WAS A SIMILAR RECOGNITION THAT THE ARMED FORCES ACTED IN RESPONSE TO POPULAR SENTIMENT. THIS IS IMPORTANT, O ESTADO OBSERVED, BECAUSE IT "ALLOWS THE OPE THAT TODAY'S POPULAR CLAMOR FOR A RETURN TO A STATE OF LAW WILL NO LONGER BE CONSIDERED UTOPIAN OR SUBVERSIVE" BY THESE SAME ARMED FORCES.

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